

HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

POLICY STATEMENT

The human and civil rights of all people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities must be honored, protected, and enforced.

ISSUE

Throughout history and continuing today, the human rights of our constituents have been limited and denied. These rights are generally recognized to include the right to life, liberty, property, access to voting, and equality of opportunity and others recognized by law. The right of people with disabilities to be free from discrimination is a basic human right that should be recognized as part of the fundamental law of the land. Advancing the human and civil rights of our constituents presents particular challenges:

- Many individuals, businesses, and other entities remain unaware of the rights of our constituents. The challenges include:
 - A history of discrimination and exclusion from meaningful participation in citizenship.
 - Societal attitudes of devaluation and fear.
 - Unfounded beliefs that they do not contribute to society.
 - Failure to provide necessary supports for full community participation.
 - Overprotection without freedom to exercise individual rights.
 - Under-compensation for labor and services.
 - Prejudice that views people with mental retardation as unworthy of public funding.

POSITION

Our constituents are entitled to human and civil rights, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, culture, severity of disability, or intensity of needed supports. These rights include life, liberty, property, access to voting, and equality of opportunity. All people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities must have the supports they need to exercise and ensure their human rights. Local, state, and national governments must vigorously enforce all human and civil rights.

*Adopted: The Arc, Congress of Delegates, November 9, 2002
AAMR Board of Directors, May 28, 2002*

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